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LETTER DATED 17 OCTOBER 1995 FROM THE CHARGE D'AFFAIRES A.I. OF THE PERMANENT MISSION OF YUGOSLAVIA TO THE UNITED NATIONS ADDRESSED TO THE PRESIDENT OF THE SECURITY COUNCIL

Despite the fact that the cease-fire agreement between the parties in Bosnia and Herzegovina came into effect at 2301 hours GMT on 12 October 1995, the Bosnian Muslim and Croat forces, supported by the Croatian regular army, continued their merciless offensive against the Bosnian Serb towns of Sanski Most, Mrkonjic Grad and Kljuc, triggering heavy civilian casualties and another mass exodus of 50,000 Bosnian Serb refugees who are fleeing for their lives towards Banja Luka.

The offensive in western Bosnia, whose ultimate goal is the seizure of Prijedor and Banja Luka, is continuing unabated despite the demands of the Security Council contained in the presidential statement of 12 October 1995 (S/PRST/1995/52), that all parties fully comply with the provisions of the cease-fire agreement and refrain from any military activity that could seriously jeopardize the peace process.

According to the accounts of the Red Cross of Yugoslavia, which just visited the area, on each tractor trailer and horse-driven cart there were more than 20 refugees. Columns of refugees are also fleeing on foot towards Banja Luka with no possessions whatsoever, lost and desperate. The local authorities and humanitarian organizations do not have any means or possibilities to offer assistance. Children, the infirm and the elderly are dying on the roads and being buried there. In the past four days, along the road four children from the refugee population of Sanski Most and Ostra Luka died. The towns of Doboj, Teslic, Brod, Vukosavlje, Samac, Derventa, Modrica and Prnjavor are full of refugee women, children and the infirm. The majority of these people do not have any shelter or are seeking one under improvised covers without basic conditions for survival. In Omarska alone, there are more than 30,000 people left in the open.

This dramatic situation, which has occurred in the wake of the continuation of the Muslim-Croat offensive, threatens not only the cease-fire and the cessation of hostilities but can lead the parties away from the peace process. Therefore, the charges that have been levelled against the Serbs in Bosnia are

to a great extent artificial. The Serbs are now the victims, which is testified to by the latest conquests of the Croats and Muslims and the massive exodus of Serb refugees. If one side is led to despair, then it will be very difficult to keep the peace process on track.

The Bosnian Muslim-Croat offensive in north-western Bosnia has been crucially assisted by the troops of the regular Croatian army, which have been recently reinforced by fresh units supplied with the most sophisticated and modern weapons. Taking into account the agreement on the constitutional basic principles reached in Geneva and New York, as well as the agreement on the cease-fire, the presence of the Croatian regular army in Bosnia and Herzegovina and its military engagement is illegitimate and politically and morally unacceptable.

Having in mind the extreme gravity of the situation, I call upon the Security Council to take urgent measures to stop the Bosnian Muslim-Croat offensive and prevent a humanitarian catastrophe that seriously threatens to undermine the entire peace process in Bosnia and Herzegovina.

I should be grateful if you would have the present letter circulated as a document of the Security Council.

(Signed) Vladislav JOVANOVIĆ
Ambassador
Chargé d'affaires a.i.